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Speech of  
Gerrit Smith on  
The Country.  
New York,  
1862.



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Book 2

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# SPEECH

OF

# GERRIT SMITH,

ON

# THE COUNTRY,

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# SPEECH OF GERRIT SMITH,

Will our nation be saved? I do not ask whether it will be saved from being destroyed by this Rebellion, but whether it will be saved from its hard heart—from its heart to oppress and enslave. That heart, and not the Rebellion, is the disease of which the nation is dying. The Rebellion is but one of the symptoms of the disease, and is no more to be confounded with the disease than is coughing with consumption.

The Rebellion is not only not our disease; but horrible as it is, it is not so much as the worst symptom of it. The endeavor two years since to make peace between the North and the South at the further expense of the crushed and innocent negroes was a far worse symptom. Nay, in that endeavor—in that climax of meanness and malignity—is to be seen the very worst of all the symptoms. "But as for these sheep, what had they done?" But as for these harmless and helpless negroes, what had they done, that this expense also should fall upon them? Another symptom of the disease preying upon the vitals of this nation was the outrages of the Slave Power in Kansas. The Fugitive Slave Act was another. The Missouri Compromise and its Repeal were each of them such a symptom. The cruel and diabolical expulsion of the Indians to make more room for Slavery was another. So too was there another in the mean and murderous War for the same foul purpose against unoffending Mexico.

A heart so hard as to hold millions and fresh millions in Slavery—in that condition where they are denied all right to wife and husband and children and knowledge and wages, and where body and mind and soul all lie at the absolute disposal of an irresponsible despotism—this, and this alone, is the disease of which our nation is dying. Will it be cured? Not soon, I fear. Repentance is the only remedy. The Abolitionists, beginning with William Lloyd Garrison, have been prescribing it for more than thirty years. But the nation has constantly refused to try it: and even now, in the midst of her terrible sufferings from the disease, she persists in refusing to try it.

I admit, that there is increasing ground to hope that the Rebellion will be put down. I say this too, notwithstanding the recent disaster at Fredericksburg. For I see nothing in it to discourage us. On the contrary I find much encouragement in the determination and daring displayed by our brave army. With here and there a splendid exception, determi-

nation and daring have been our essential lack all the way through the War, whilst of indecision and delay, hesitancy and shrinking we have constantly had a riotous abundance. I cannot advert to the battle of Fredericksburg without saying out of a grateful heart: All honor to our valiant soldiers who fought and fell in it; and all honor to our valiant soldiers, who fought by their side and survive them! As said Tennyson of the immortal six hundred in the Crimean War, so say I of these our immortal ones:

"When can their glory fade?"

I admitted the better prospect for putting down the Rebellion. But let us remember that it may be put down, and still the national disease be left uncured. I believe that our Government is at last convinced that its hesitating and inefficient prosecution of the War has failed to conciliate either the Southern leaders or their allies among the Northern Democratic leaders. I believe it now sees that only by an unconditional and vigorous prosecution of the War can it command the respect, or inspire the dread, or discourage the endeavors, or win the good will of either of these classes of leaders. In a word, the Government is, I trust, at last resolved to put down the Rebellion, cost what it may to put it down. I believe, too, that none of our Generals will any longer show more concern for the cause of the enemy than for our own cause. I believe that none of them will any longer, by pledging themselves to put down servile insurrections, assure the Rebels of the continued safety of their families. I believe that none of them will any longer feel bound to provide guards for Rebel homes, or to be so concerned to supply the South with food as to seize and return to her fields the laborers who had absconded from them. I believe that none of them will any longer, either in these or other ways, virtually tell the Rebels that, so far from a large share of them being needed to stay behind for the protection of their homes or the production of their crops, they can every one of them be spared to come out to shoot our soldiers and send distress into our families. Oh, had this been so at the beginning of the War, then should we, ere this, have seen the end of the War! Oh, had we, when the Rebels first struck at the life of the nation, instantly struck back at their life by proclaiming liberty to the slaves, then had our nation been now safe, and tens of thousands of her families escaped their sorrow! The excuse for this omission is, that the people were not then prepared to have this decisive blow struck. But they were. Their right feeling was then at high tide; and just because it was not then availed of, it has been ebbing away ever since. Ours is the only nation on the face of the earth that,

in such circumstances, would not have instantly struck back with its hardest and deadliest blow. There are mobs so tame and timid that you can scatter them by shooting over their heads or at their legs. But the very first shots into this mad Southern mob should have been aimed at the head and the heart. Hence the great Emancipation gun, which always aims its shots at the vitals, should have been brought out at the very beginning.

Yes, I believe that the prospect of putting down the Rebellion is much improved. The folly of trying to put it down, and of trying in at the same time to keep up Slavery, is now apparent. The madness of refusing to march out our armies against the Rebellion, and the madness of refusing to vote against it, save on the condition in either case that Slavery shall be preserved, no candid man any longer denies. In nothing I have said do I mean to countenance the charge that our Pro-Slavery Generals are traitors. I see no more reason for calling Gen. McClellan a traitor than for calling Gen. Scott one, or Gov. Seward one, or the President one. They are all opposed to the Rebellion, and would all have it put down. They all love their country and their whole country, and would be very sad at seeing it divided. It is true that there was a time when they were all opposed to an uncompromising and unconditional coercion of the Rebels. His famous letter of March 3, 1861, to Gov. Seward, as also his choice of Gen. McClellan to be his successor, proves that Gen. Scott was opposed to it. Gov. Seward was also, as is manifest from his correspondence with Mr. Adams and from other sources. It was by compromises and conditions, by burdens easy to be borne by both the Northern and the Southern whites, because all to be laid on the shoulders of the blacks; it was by the bloodless and winning rhetoric of diplomacy; and it was not by any stern and compulsory processes, that he expected to be able to reduce the life of the Rebellion to the short period of sixty or ninety days. I confess that I did myself believe that the Rebellion would be short. But it was only because I was so credulous as to believe, that the outrage would turn the people of the North into Abolitionists and into deadly enemies of that system, which is at once the cause of the Rebellion and the great essential and indispensable means of sustaining it. I said that the President, as well as those other gentlemen, was opposed to such a coercion of the Rebels. For surely had there not been harmony between himself and them at a point so important, he would have preferred that others should occupy their places. There can be no reasonable doubt that all of them believed that the proper and effectual way to overcome the Rebellion was faithfully to prosecute the compound purpose of restoring the Country, the Constitution, and Slavery to their condition before the Rebellion, save only that Slavery was to have extended territory and even new Constitutional advantages. Doubtless had they foreseen the vast dimensions, the determined and terrible spirit of the Rebellion, they would have known that it could be put down only by the simple purpose of putting it down, and not possibly by blending any other purposes with it. I trust that they all now see, that such a Rebellion can be put down only by unconditionally aiming to put it down—only by aiming to put it down, come what will of Slavery or the Constitution, aye, or even of the Country. I say even of the Country. I speak considerably. For as the father is to put down the child who revolts against his authority, and to do so without at all weighing the question whether he shall thereby break up or save his family; so Government is to put down a gang of Slavery-frenzied and Satan-inspired Rebels, even though to do so

shall cost its every shilling and every acre, its last strength and last credit. Notwithstanding my abundant advocacy for a quarter of a century of the Constitution and the whole Constitution, I do not like to have our War called a War for the Constitution.—And I would rather not have it called a War for the Country. Call it rather a War to put down the Rebels—to put them down Constitution or no Constitution, Country or no Country. Say you this is a reckless spirit? Nevertheless it is only by this spirit that you can conquer—nay, only by this spirit that you can save either Constitution or Country. Upon the Divine principle, that “he who loses his life shall save it,” the people who are so noble as to respond to calls still more commanding than the high duty of preserving Country and Constitution, shall have, in return for their sublime devotion, both Country and Constitution vouchsafed to them. Upon the Divine principle of getting all by forsaking all, we lose nothing if we do what must be done even though it can be done but at the seeming hazard of losing both Constitution and Country.

“Submit or be conquered,” is the only alternative that Government can offer the Rebels. Government can neither propose nor accept a Compromise. Government can tolerate no intervention, foreign or domestic. Foreign intervention it will regard as a declaration of war, and domestic intervention it will punish as treason. As well might the father have referred to consent to a compromise or an intervention in the case of himself and his revolting child. I repeat that, “Submit or be conquered” is our only alternative to the Rebels. If we consent to waive it for compromise, intervention, or mediation, or to modify it in any wise, however slightly, we perish. Our determination to beat the Rebels must be as strong, and, in regard to consequences, as reckless, as is theirs to beat us, or it will be in vain for us even to double the number of our regiments and our armed vessels.

This favorite Democratic idea of holding the sword in one hand and the olive branch in the other makes quite a pretty picture; and perhaps there are Rebellions which pictures can overcome. But our Rebellion is not one of them. To overcome that needs stern, uncompromising, unrelenting terms.

I say farther in regard to this mistake, into which so many of our leaders fell at the beginning of the War, that the country has no right to complain of it. For the country, in common with these leaders, was debauched by Slavery. In common with them, it had been trained to regard Slavery as among all interests the most sacred—as among them all the supreme. The present and the past of our country, her policy and traditions, all went to make our Pro-Slavery conduct of the war a thing of course. No other could reasonably have been expected. The country had better confess it—even though to do so might render her still more the world's laughing stock and scorn—that when Slavery, after all her other outrages upon her, at last took up arms against her, her poor Slavery-infatuated people were in no more mood and condition to put down the Rebellion (the Rebellion being simply Slavery in arms) than drunkards would be to put down a whisky insurrection. Drunkards cannot fight against whisky. Nor were we then prepared to fight against Slavery. Neither could fight against its conqueror. None of the people are to-day capable of good service against this Pro-Slavery Rebellion except such of them as have succeeded in breaking the strong withes with which Slavery had bound them, and as are now no longer cowed in its presence.

God be praised that many of our leaders and of our people have learned much in the progress of this War. Among the things they have learned is, that this blatant solicitude to save the Constitution is but

hypocrisy—is hut solicitude to save Slavery. Under all this affected regard for the Constitution, the real regard is for Slavery. This using the Constitution to block the wheels of war, and thus save Slavery, is a crime against the Constitution and the Country, which, I trust, will not be perpetrated much longer.

The Constitution, say the sticklers for Slavery, gives the President no right to liberate slaves. I admit that he does not derive it from the Constitution alone. It takes both the Constitution and the Law of civilized warfare to confer it on him. The Constitution makes him the Head of the Army, and the Law of civilized warfare authorizes him, as such, to strengthen himself and weaken the foe by disposing of slaves, or anything else that may stand in his way—by turning them, or anything else, to the best possible account. It is by this Law, and not by the Constitution, that he appropriates the buildings, horses, cattle, and other property of the enemy. By this Law alone is it that he provides for the feeding, clothing, and exchanging of prisoners. By this alone that he is forbidden to poison food or wells, or to kill prisoners, or sell them into Slavery. I add that, as this Law shall vary, his rights, being under it, must also vary. If it shall ever require the paroling of all prisoners, then he must parole all prisoners.

Let me say that it is solely in the light of this International Law of War, that Congress should have seen what would be a proper disposition for our nation to make of the hands of the Rebels. The Constitutional limitation of the scope of Attinder had nothing at all to do with the case. What a Court may do with the house or farm of a person judicially convicted of treason is very far from being the measure of what the nation may do with the hundreds of millions of acres belonging to millions of Rebels. Congress, like the President, must look, not at all into the Constitution, but solely into this International Law, to learn the penalties of War. I say this, not because the Constitution does not clothe Congress with ample powers for its share in conducting War. For it does. It empowers Congress to make whatever laws it may deem "necessary and proper" for carrying into effect its Declaration of War. Thus we see that, whilst the President is restricted in his Department by the Law of War, Congress in its Department of legislation has unlimited power. Why I said that Congress should look into this International Law to learn the penalties of War, was because Congress like the President should, in making up an opinion of the kind or degree of penalty suitable in a given case, defer and conform to the usages of the civilized world. Congress should not make laws that are in conflict with these usages. There should be none such for the President to execute.

Nothing can be more absurd or disingenuous than this incessant prating of the duty of taking all our steps in the War according to the Constitution. With the exception of a few Constitutional starting points, an old almanac would be as legitimate and useful a guide as the Constitution. In a war with Great Britain we would not allow her, nor would she allow us, to proceed by a National Constitution. Neither would the other nations allow it. We should be compelled to proceed by the International Constitution—by the Law of civilized warfare. So is it in our strife with the South—a strife which has put on the dimensions and character of a national war, and is therefore to be conducted in the main as national wars are conducted.

I might have said, when speaking of the sources of the powers of the Head of the Army, that the vexed question whether the President can suspend the writ of *Habeas Corpus* is reduced to no question at all in the light of the fact, that the Constitution makes him the Head of the Army, and that his right in this

capacity virtually to suspend the Writ is indispensable. I say his right *virtually* to suspend it. For if I could maintain his right *literally* to suspend it I need not. To show his right to override, ignore, and nullify the Writ is sufficient: and that can be shown by a mere illustration—by any one of ten thousand illustrations. In the march of his Army he meets with a dozen traitors, who try to seduce men from his ranks or prevent men from enlisting in them. To turn them over to the Civil authority—to its slow, uncertain, and perhaps disloyal proceedings—would by no means meet the urgent demands of the case. May he not so much as imprison them, and keep them imprisoned in spite of Writs, or ought else? If he may not, then there is no remedy against the ruin of both Army and Country. But he clearly may; and as clearly might he thus serve offenders, were they perpetrating such mischief, ten, or a hundred, or even a thousand miles away from his Army. As clearly, too, might he thus serve those who were in other ways periling the cause and the life of the nation. I add, that it is not from the Constitution alone that he learns his right to do this. He learns it, as he learns his right to do the other things mentioned, from the Constitution, taken in connection with the usages of war. He finds in the Constitution that he is the Head of the Army. But what he may do in that capacity he finds in those usages. Let me add further, that the Constitution, having made him unqualifiedly the Head of the Army, it there are words in it which, if applied to him as such, would cripple him, they are clearly not to be construed as crippled to such application.

Do you say, that the President may abuse his right to withstand the *Habeas Corpus*?—and that he may abuse it to the ruin of innocent men and their families? I admit it. This is one of the fearful but necessary risks of war, which admonish us to be exceedingly slow to get into war. The Head of the Army, be he Emperor, King or President, must, for the very life of the nation, have the right in time of war to lay hands on whom he will, and as he will. It is, however, no small security against the abuse of this right, that when Peace shall be restored it may be punished. The Bill, recently introduced into Congress by Thaddeus Stevens, does not go to protect the President in the abuse but only in the exercise of the right. The President, no more than any other person, is at liberty to perpetrate a wrong under the cover and in the name of a conceded right. When we shall again be blest with Peace, then punish Abraham Lincoln, or whoever may be the more responsible one, as severely as you please for the perversions of his office—be it that the perversions have sprung from ambition, avarice, malevolence or whatever form of selfishness.

I alluded to the President's famous Proclamation. Let me say, in passing, that I am not of the number of those Abolitionists who complain of its heartlessness. He was not at liberty, in writing it, to study the interests of the slaves or of any other class. It is purely a military paper, and anything embodied in it beyond the purpose of helping on the War would have been grossly wrong, and would have been utterly void both in the eye of the Constitution and of the Law of war. I readily admit that the President is to aim to do much for the slaves; but not in his military capacity. In that capacity, he can help the slaves only incidentally.

I adverted to the present more favorable prospect of putting down the Rebellion. But, as I added, the Rebellion may be put down, and the country nevertheless be not saved—or, in other words, its disease be not cured. Nor did I mean that it would necessarily be saved by the abolition of Slavery. Slavery is, and from the day of the bombarding of Sumter it has been, in a rapid course of extinction. It is highly



probable that within a very few years it will have wholly disappeared from the country. Very soon there will be no Democratic party in favor of re-establishing Slavery. The Democratic Party, which will spring up after Slavery is abolished, will represent a genuine Democracy most widely contrasting with the spurious Democracy of the Party which now presumes to call itself Democratic. The present Democratic Party cannot survive Slavery. It lives in the life of Slavery, and will die in its death. Full well does it know this: and hence its close and anxious clings to Slavery. More than this, when Peace shall have returned, and the passions of War shall have subsided, and the cost of it in life and treasure shall have been counted, the people will be so decided against there being another Pro-Slavery War that they will leave no door open for it, and therefore leave no shreds of Slavery in the land. They will feel that they have had enough, and more than enough, of Slavery.

Most properly do I speak of this War as a Pro-Slavery War. France and England, in their eagerness to believe whatever is to the discredit and disadvantage of this vast Republic, may try to believe the nonsense that the Secession was caused by our High Tariff. But the South neither believes nor says it. In point of fact we never had a Tariff so nearly approaching Free Trade, as that which existed when the War began. Again, it was by means of the Secession, and the consequent withdrawal of Southern Members of Congress, that we were able to get the High Tariff. And, again, we needed the High Tariff to supply Government with means to overcome the Secession. In a word, we must have a War Tariff. Another, and no less false and nonsensical excuse for the Secession is, that it was provoked by the North's violations of Pro-Slavery laws. The Democratic Party was certainly not guilty of such violations; and the reason why the Radical Abolitionists would not join the Republican Party was, that it persisted in its Pro-Slavery interpretation of the Constitution, and in enforcing all the infernal Pro-Slavery legislation. Of all our Presidents, no one ever entered upon his office with so eager and earnest promises as did Mr. Lincoln, (see his Inaugural and elsewhere,) to execute against innocent and holy Freedom all laws, either inside or outside of the Constitution, made to serve bloody and abominable Slavery. Another, and by far the most popular and generally credited excuse for the Rebellion is, that the South was driven to it by the successful attempts of the Anti-Slavery men in turning the American mind against Slavery. When I was quite a young man we agitated the question in this State of the suppression of Lotteries; and we succeeded; and got them prohibited in the organic law. I admit it was right for the Pro-Lottery men to hold the Anti-Lottery men responsible for that change in public sentiment. But I do not admit that had the Pro-Lottery men resorted to arms, it would have been right to hold the Anti-Lottery men responsible for that resort. It would however have been as right for them to do so, as it is for the Pro-Slavery men to lay the blame of their own recourse to arms on the men whose only crime is the impressions, which their discussions of Slavery had made on the public mind. If people have a system or an institution which cannot withstand argument, be it Slavery or Lotteries, or even Protestantism or Catholicism, let them hasten to exchange it for one that can. Above all, let them not get so far back into the Dark Ages as to return argument with lead and steel; the utterances of the soul with the death of the body.

No, this is a purely Pro-Slavery Rebellion. It was begun for the sole purpose of ridding Slavery of dangers and securing to it new advantages: and one

of the first steps in it was to eternize the abomination by making it the corner-stone of the new Government. Not any of the Free States have ever favored the Rebellion: but from the first all of them have been banded against it. Eleven of the Slave States embarked in it: and the great reason why the remaining four did not is that in large sections of each of them the Pro-Slavery interest and spirit are slight, because of the small proportion which the slaves bear to the whole population. I added, in respect to one of these four States, Kentucky, that no other of all the Slave States has been so effectively in our way as she, with her hostile politics more damaging than even her hostile arms. In another of the four, Missouri, we have had to fight bloodier battles than in Kentucky. In another, Maryland, the rebel influence has been peculiarly perilous to us, because peculiarly disingenuous and sly. No other two States in the nation have periled our cause so much as Maryland and Kentucky. The other of these four States, Delaware, is too small in both territory and population to be of much account. Could its Southern half have had its way, Delaware too would have joined the Secession. All four of them would have joined it but for their dread of Union troops.

I said that Slavery might be put away and our nation be not saved. If it be not put away in the spirit of penitence; if our hard rational heart—our heart of injustice and oppression—shall survive Slavery; then will the nation remain unsewed, and evils scarcely less or perhaps even greater than this Rebellion may soon break out to prove that it is unsewed. The putting away of Slavery in the spirit and for the purpose in which and for which the President's Proclamation would put it away, is good as far as it goes. But to put it away simply in this spirit and simply for this purpose would fall very far short of saving the nation. It would put it away in the spirit of selfishness and merely to save ourselves, and our heart be still unbroken by a sense of our crimes against the black man, we may go on to become a greater criminal and marauder than ever, and be therefore further from national salvation than ever. In its characteristic greed of territory and characteristic overweening confidence in its strength, our impatient nation might be left to undertake wars of conquest and plunder against every nation within its reach. Such or any other flagrantly iniquitous undertaking on its part would not begin its ruin, but would rather demonstrate and deepen its previous ruin. A nation no less than an individual given up to work injustice was long before ruined. In this connection let me say that the first victim of injustice is always he who perpetrates it. Moreover, whilst the injury it does to him against whom it is directed, may be but outward and superficial and easily cured, that which it does to him from whom it proceeds is inward and radical, and but too generally incurable.

I referred to the speedy termination of American Slavery. Would that it might have been the bloodless termination which the handful of Abolitionists labored for during thirty years. But they were not listened to. No age listens to its prophets. Hence Slavery is going out in blood. And one of the proofs that it is going out under God's own hand and in God's own way—the way that that He would have chosen, but which our impotence compelled Him to take—is, that this is not the blood of the slave, but of his common oppressors, the whites of the North and the whites of the South. When shall this blood cease to flow? Perhaps not until these oppressors have repented. And not very improbable is it that ere long English blood will come to flow with it—the blood of that England, who has so long been entrenching herself out of the

unpaid toil of the Slave—of that England once so conspicuously and honorably opposed to Slavery, but now, alas, through her influential men, in such guilty and shameless sympathy with it! From the hour when, in the Trent case, England, not allowing even one moment for negotiation or explanation, virtually declared war against hand-tied America, from that hour to the present American hatred of England has been growing wider and deeper. Every arrival from England, freighted as it is with fresh evidences of England's growing hatred of us, increases our hatred of her. Things look more and more as if God's time had at last come for punishing those nations, which have been the chief reapers of the blood-stained harvests of American Slavery. Let impenitent England see to it, that her sympathy with Slavery does not result in the dismemberment of her Empire. And, let France, too, who also has interests on this side of the Atlantic, and who is insuently bent on extending them, begin to calculate the possible consequences to herself of her taking sides with a Pro-Slavery Rebellion. England and France, especially England, are already suffering greatly from the effect of this Rebellion on their manufactures. But far more may they yet have to suffer in consequence of their guilty attitude toward it.

Let me not be understood to do injustice to the English people. They love justice. It is their controlling leaders who do not. It is these, and not the people, who are in sympathy with Slavery and the South. The people are with Freedom and the North. One of the most beautiful and touching things in our day is the patience with which the starving English operatives bear the sufferings, which this Rebellion has brought upon them. They tell us that they would not have them terminated by wrong to the slave; and that they are willing to suffer on, if only the slave can be made free. Sublime conduct! Would we Americans, if brought into such circumstances, be found capable of it?

To return to the point whence I set out. Will this nation be saved? Will she consent to the cost of her salvation? In other words, will she give up her Pro-Slavery heart in exchange for a heart of pity and love and justice for the victims of her oppression? I much fear she will not. She would not do so in the day when she prospered in her oppression. She has not done so in this dark night when she is suffering the penalties of that oppression. The Church is here and there beginning to denounce Slavery. But scarcely anywhere has she begun to confess her own guilty share in it. A self-justifying spirit in regard to Slavery still prevails in both the political Parties; and the press of the Democratic Party is still wicked and shameless enough to make arguments in proof of the economical and political advantages of upholding Slavery. Half the voters in the Free States are ready to-day to vote for a Peace on the basis of Pro-Slavery compromises. And not a very small proportion of our recently elected Governors would be glad to have the North succumb to the South and purchase Peace by consenting to such changes in the Constitution, as would favor the extension and perpetuity of Slavery. In the light of such facts may we not well fear that our country is lost?

Another illustration of the deep, and perhaps desperate, debauchment of our country by Slavery is that for thirty years "Abolitionist" has been the most odious name in it. Church members have been quick to disown it. Politicians have studied to show their loathing of it in every possible way, and to every possible degree. Gen. Wadsworth (all honor to him!) is one of the very few of our eminent men who dare to welcome and wear the name. And he does this even when in nomination for a high

office. But the name was fatal to him. He was highly qualified for the office. He was wise, practical, and just. His generous use of his large estate had contributed to make him popular. His having gone into the army, with his sons and son-in-law, and bravely and freely exposed his person in battle, had added greatly to his popularity. But, alas! he was an Abolitionist—and therefore could not be elected! He would have been by the largest majority ever known in the State, had all voted for him who refused to do so because he was an Abolitionist, and also all, who voted for his opponent because his opponent was an Anti-Abolitionist.

Socially, as well as ecclesiastically and politically, "Abolitionist" is a disadvantageous, shunned and abhorred name. Even now, after all that the Rebellion has done to redeem the name from its odiousness, the man who would get into what is called "good society," had better be a debauchee or drunkard—nay, both—than an Abolitionist. I very well remember being told by that keen observer of men and things, Edmund Quincy, when walking the streets of Boston with him, more than twenty years ago, that the great objection of his friends to his being an Abolitionist was *that the thing is so vulgar*. The Abolitionists were nearly all plain and natural people—and therefore vulgar in the eyes of fashionable and conventional people. Moreover, their having identified themselves with a degraded and cast-off race made them intensely vulgar in such eyes. Emphatically true is it that at West Point one could not formerly (however it may be now) be a gentleman and yet an Abolitionist. Hence an Abolitionist in that School was well nigh as scarce "as a wolf in England or a toad in Ireland." What folly to expect that officers educated to associate all that is honorable and gentlemanly with Slavery, and the reverse of this with Anti-Slavery, should put their whole heart into an earnest resistance to a Pro-Slavery Rebellion! For my part, I think that our West Point officers, considering what a Pro-Slavery education the country chose for them, have done better than we had a right to expect. It is true that, when the Rebellion broke out, many of them paid us for that education by entering the Southern army, and that many who remained at the North paid us for it by sympathizing with the South. But it is also true that many of the graduates of West Point are among the most faithful and able officers in the Northern army. What is quite noteworthy in this connection is that the South, in running through the vocabulary of bad names for one with which most effectively to stigmatize and sting the Northern army, has usually lighted on Abolitionist. She calls it the "Abolitionist Army"—and this, too, notwithstanding she must know what dangerous thoughts the name cannot fail to put into the heads of her slaves. But she could not forego the opportunity—she could not resist the temptation—to mortify and disgrace us.

I spoke of "good society." Being an Abolitionist—bred one and born one—it is not supposable that I ever was in it. To get now and then into its suburbs or immediate surroundings would be as much as I could reasonably expect. The thing itself would be ever beyond my reach. I have said this much of myself to follow it with the remark, that seldom in my approaches to "good society" do I fail to witness such loathings of the Abolitionists and the negroes, and therein such insensibility to the claims of decency and justice, humanity and religion, as excite afresh my apprehension that Slavery has debauched and debased the country beyond a reasonable hope of its recovery.

The one thing which this nation needs to do is to make "Abolitionist" the most popular name in it—to make it as attractive as it is now repulsive.

For nothing short of this will express her adequate repentance for her stupendous crime of having held, during her national existence, fifteen to twenty millions of immortal beings in Slavery. Will the nation be brought to do this honor—this merited honor—to that hated name? Will her Seymours and Rynders, her Van Burens, and Bennetts, and Woods ever be found singing Garrison's sublime song:

"I am an Abolitionist—I glory in the name!"

I fear she will have to wait for their children, it not indeed for the children's children, to sing these brave words.

How great the change—ere the name of Abolitionist shall become thus popular! Ere it become so the negro must cease to be driven from the public conveyance, and from the school, and church, and cemetery. Ere it become so there must be tears of penitence over his wrongs, instead of the heartless laughter over his sorrows and helplessness, and the fiendish shouts of exultation over his crushed manhood. I repeat, how great the change! And yet until this change the nation cannot be saved. For, until this change, God will continue to be at war with her. And every nation, as well as every individual, with whom God is at war, is lost, all present, and seeming, and superficial appearances to the contrary notwithstanding—lost until repentance shall come; and lost forever, if it shall never come.

Great, indeed, must be the change ere "Abolitionist" shall become so honored a name! Before that change can take place, our question: "What shall we do with the blacks?" will be regarded as no less absurd than would be their question: "What shall we do with the whites?" Before that change, they will be left as free as any other race to go where they will, or stay where they will. Their equal rights will be recognized; and manhood will be held to be as sacred and inviolable in them as in others. Emancipation will doubtless drain the Free States and Canada of a large share of their blacks. But this will be solely because Emancipation falls in with nature, and offers an inviting way South to a people who, in violation of nature, were dragged to the ungenial North.

I have glanced at this spirit of caste, which incessantly clamors for the expatriation of the blacks. That our rulers, and our chief rulers too, should at any time be guilty of ministering to this mean and murderous spirit is very sad. That they should find leisure and have the heart to do so at such a time as this—a time when millions of Rebels are at the throat of the nation—is indeed deeply discouraging. Emphatically poor employment to be getting out of the country at such a time the only entirely loyal element in its whole population. But come what will of country, the one great prejudice of our people must be gratified. Let the nation perish! but let not hatred of the negro perish!

To return for a moment to this question: "What shall we do with the blacks?" Although I would have this insulting question, which every day comes welling up out of our Pro-Slavery hearts, die away forever, I nevertheless would have the whole land ring with the question: "What shall we do for the blacks?" And this reasonable and pertinent question I would have both the North and South answer by doing for these outraged ones, in addition to giving them freedom, education, and wages, everything which penitence and pity, love and justice can suggest. To do *with* the blacks is to insult, cheapen, and degrade them, while to do *for* men as we have opportunity is a duty toward the highest as well as the lowest, and dishonoring to neither.

I pass on to ask what we shall do for the South. For her own sake, as well as for ours and the world's sake, we must defeat her. To let her Rebel-

lion triumph, and to let her come up into the piratical nation she purposes to be, would be to let her become as unhappy as she is guilty. To save her—to save her from herself—we must be just and kind to her—as we shall be if we bear in mind how largely responsible the whole nation is for the Rebellion. The South rebelled because the nation began to show signs of not letting the slaveholders go where they would with their slaves. Now, was not a part of the guilt of the Rebellion fairly chargeable on the nation, which had practically (whether with or against the Constitution is immaterial to the argument) recognized the Southern laborers to be property, and therefore subject to removal as well as to the other liabilities of property? Whoever doubts the nation's having done so, should read Jay's "View of the action of the Federal Government in behalf of Slavery," and Giddings's "Exiles of Florida." As we had done so much to countenance and educate the South in her crime—her crime of crimes—and as we were still impudently Pro-Slavery—was it not, to say the least, very ungracious in us to threaten to restrict her commission of it?

We shall, I trust, take her slaves out of the hands of the South. But that will be a comparatively easy thing. That will be done by our superior physical power. An infinitely more difficult work for us will be to take the spirit of slaveholding out of her heart. That we can do only by a superior moral power—only by first taking it out of our own heart. Our repentance of slaveholding will be mighty to work *her* repentance of it. It is often said that the North and the South have become so unlike each other, as never to be able to live together again under the same Government. But common repentance of a great common sin goes very far to make the penitents resemble each other. They are alike before the repentance. They are more alike after it. There will no longer be ground for complaining of a lack of homogeneity in the Americans after the North and South shall have repented of their common wickedness against the black man. True yoke-fellows after that will they be in the work of lifting up and enlightening the large black element and the larger and scarcely less barbarous white element in her population. The North will send down thousands of laborers in this blessed work; and the South will welcome them. Ungrudging and unlimited moneys and means will the North put into Southern hands to be used in a cause that will then be equally dear to both North and South.

I said that for our own sake we must defeat the nefarious purpose of the South to rob us of our country. To the heart of the patriot all is lost when country is lost. When our nation shall be divided into two nations—nay, into four or five, as it will soon be, should the South succeed—we shall have no nation left; and, on this side of the grave, no home left.

And I said that for the world's sake we must defeat the South. For the world's sake we must not suffer this nascent piratical nation to pass its infancy. For the world's sake we must not suffer such a scourge as it would be to the world—such a *hostis humani generis*—to grow up in America. Hence, for the world's sake, we must put down this Pro-Slavery Rebellion, and purge the American land of Slavery, and the American heart of the spirit of Slaveholding. When all this shall be done, how rapidly will the redundant and the discontented populations of other nations be attracted to happy homes in this! And then the immigrant, no longer as now a subject, from the day he lands, of the perverting and debasing appliances of a Pro-Slavery Party, will immediately come under influences as

purifying and expanding as the present influences upon immigrants are corrupting and shriveling. I add, that when all this shall be done, there will very soon be no Slavery left in any part of Christendom. I was happy, but not surprised, to learn that the price of slaves declined in Cuba as soon as the news of the President's Proclamation reached the island. She would be able to maintain her Slavery scarcely a year after ours had ceased. Brazil has long been shaping herself to get rid of Slavery. She will accelerate her steps to this end when her Slavery shall be deprived of the countenance given to it by American Slavery.

And then when America shall be sorrow-stricken for having chained and lashed, and bought and sold and imbruted so many millions of innocent men and women; and when her statesmen shall be ashamed of every word they had spoken for Slavery, and be ready to wash out with their tears every word they had written for it; then will our Free Institutions, hitherto obscured by the black cloud of Slavery, and ineffably disgraced by an unnatural alliance with their veriest opposite and their deadliest enemy, shine out as the Sun, and fast become the desire of the whole earth. Precious Institutions! They shall yet bless the whole earth, slaveholders and all other tyrants to the contrary notwithstanding. Precious Institutions! I repeat. The masses of men can never rise under any other political institutions than those which are Republican or Democratic.

And far more than this. When America shall have penitently put away Slavery, and not only her statesmen shall be deeply and painfully ashamed of having contributed to uphold it, but her conscience-convicted ecclesiastics shall at last be sensible of their blood-guiltiness—then will Christianity be not only relieved of American misrepresentation, but powerfully commended to the nations by regenerated America. It is vain to expect the prevalence of Christianity so long as the nations shall continue in her name to trample upon human rights. The true Christianity does, in distinction from the counterfeit, honor God's rights through the honoring of man's rights. Herein is the great difference between Heathenism and Christianity. The one sacrifices men to God, while the other makes caring for men the most acceptable worship of God. The current Christianity is but too generally only a little better than a modified Heathenism. But the blotting out of Slavery in all Christendom will go far toward lifting up the current to the standard of the true Christianity.

I must close. We see in the light of what has been said, that our trust to put down the Rebellion and so save the nation, must not be alone in our superior material forces. It must be also in justice, and in the God of justice—which however it cannot be unless we become just. It is not true, as Napoleon said it was—that God is on the side of the strongest battalions. He is ever on the side of justice, be it the strongest or the weakest battalions that may happen to be there. It has ever been true and it ever will be, that "the nation that will not serve Him shall perish." Many as are our people, great as are our riches and resources, and unequalled our invention and skill, we too shall perish if we fall not in with the Divine laws. But we will fall in with them—will we not? And if we will, then how grand and blessed our future! In that future our condition will in all respects rise up into correspondence with our matchless natural advantages. In that future there will be no oppression of the black man, no oppression of the red man, and no oppression of any man. Then equal justice to all. Then the North and the South, the East and the West re-linked together forever and ever. Then from sea to sea all brothers. Then a nation practically and cordially recognizing all races and all nations to be of one brotherhood. Then a nation with Christ for the leader of its people and Christ for the leader of its leaders.

Will Pro-Slavery priests and Pro-Slavery politicians say that I have here sketched but a Utopia, but an impracticable ideal perfection; and that I have sought to please my hearers with a mere fancy? We will reply, that if they and all who with them breathe the contemptuous spirit of caste, and deride the doctrine of the universal brotherhood, will but stand aside and no longer pour out their malign and withering influence on mankind, this ideal will be rapidly translated into the actual, and this fancy rapidly become a reality.

The following Resolution, which Mr. Smith offered at the beginning of his Speech, was, with the exception of a solitary negative, adopted unanimously at its close by the thousands who filled to its utmost capacity the spacious Hall in the Cooper Institute:

*Whereas*, It is no less true of a nation than of an individual, that to be just is to be saved, and to be unjust is to be lost; and

*Whereas*, Among all the greatest violations of justice, Slavery is pre-eminent.

*Resolved*, therefore, that whatever the things which need to be done by this nation in order to be saved, the persistent putting away of Slavery must not be left undone.







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